

Keynote Address by Ambassador Sichan Siv
United States Representative to the United Nations
Economic and Social Council
Dallas/Fort Worth Asian-American Citizens Council¹
Addison, Texas, September 25, 2004

AS DELIVERED

Thank you very much, Sujata Dand², for your kind words of introduction. As a naturalized Texan (*laughter*), I am delighted to be back in God's Country (*laughter and applause*). I've traveled to almost 100 countries, gone through hundreds of airports. Besides New York and Washington, I've been to DFW more often than any other airport in the world. Each time my wife Martha and I go to her hometown, Pampa, we go through DFW twice enroute to Amarillo. People say that when you die, whether you go to Heaven or Hell, you change planes at DFW (*laughter*).

President Bush stated during last May's Asian /Pacific American Heritage Month that "*Asian/Pacific Americans' achievements have greatly enriched our quality of life and have helped to determine the course of our Nation's future.*" He exhorted America "to learn more about the contributions and history of Asian/Pacific Americans and to celebrate the role they have played in our national story." The Dallas/ Fort Worth Asian-American Citizens Council has done just that with today's event.

I am so happy to be with friends, old and new: Kathy Dress³, Champ Teng⁴, Les Tanaka⁵, and Joe Chow⁶. I salute the DFW-AACC leadership under Chairman Dr. Keh-Shew Lu and President Angie Chen Button. Please give them and all their associates a round of applause (*applause*).

According to the Census Bureau, Texas is one of the fastest growing states in terms of Asian population. It is also the third largest with Asian-owned businesses, totaling about 60,200.

I am very honored to be your keynote speaker tonight. I come to you with warm regards

¹ **Dallas-Fort Worth Asian-American Citizens Council (DFW AACC)** is a non-profit organization whose membership is comprised of professionals and leaders from the general Asian community and major Asian American organizations. The DFW AACC is an organization supporting the Asian community and advocating for Asian-American issues in the Dallas-Fort Worth area to promote and assist Asian involvement in the social, political and civic endeavors. Affiliated members include major Asian American organizations such as the Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce, the Asian American Forum, the Korean American Women's Club, the Vietnamese Community of Greater Dallas, the Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce of North Texas, the Chinese Institute of Engineering, All Asian American Chamber of Commerce in Ft. Worth, Organization of Chinese Americans and many others

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from the Bush Administration as its only Asian-American Ambassador and its senior most official of Buddhist faith.

Let me share with you first some information about an important conference on October 12 in Washington sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and aptly called “Opportunity Conference: Building on America’s Promise.” Under the leadership of Secretary Elaine Chao, this initiative will address the economic development of the Asian Pacific and Hispanic American communities—two of the fastest growing segments of the 21st century workforce.

Like last year, the Department of Labor has selected the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce to reach out to the Asian American business community. This partnership is testament not only to the Chamber’s extensive network, but also to its two decades of service as the vital conduit between Asian American entrepreneurs, their business partners in corporate America and the federal government. The President of the Chamber’s Southwest division, Grace McDermott, is with us tonight.

This year’s Opportunity Conference will focus on a range of topics including: access to capital; job opportunities in high growth professions; federal grant process and procurement opportunities; and other workshops that address the needs of the Asian Pacific and Hispanic American workforce.

You invited me to tell my story as a key person in a key place. In fact, it is you who are key people in key places across this land. Tonight’s awardees⁷ and special guests are a great testimony⁸. So I stand here to offer myself as only one of the many examples. At the United Nations I represent you as well as the aspirations and talents you bring to our country, communities, and families.

I came to America in 1976 as a refugee from Cambodia. In January 1977, after picking apples in Connecticut, I decided to move to the Big Apple. While standing on a Manhattan street corner, I saw yellow Checker cabs with “Drivers Wanted” signs. I called and was told to go and take a test. It was the most difficult test I have ever taken in my life. There was a series of questions, mainly about directions. One asked: “*How do you get from the Waldorf Astoria to the United Nations?*” I had no idea where these places were, much less how to get from one to another. I may have answered all the questions wrong. At the end, I showed the test to the examiner. He glanced at the piece

⁷ David Chiu (Public and Civic Achievement Award), Les Tanaka (Pioneer Award), PAJ, Inc. (Corporate Citizen Award), Big T Plaza (Community Leadership Award – for Business), Indian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Community Leadership Award - for Non-Profit Organization), City of Plano (City of Spirit Award), Polly Flannigan (Civil Servant of the Year Award), Dr. Da Hsuan Feng (Visionary Award), Dr. Paul Coggins (You Are Always Here For Us Award), Zeming Liu (Chairman’s Award), David Way (President’s Award); Wei Wei Jeang (Member of the Year Award); in addition to Ambassador Sichan Siv (Key Person in Key Place Award).

⁸ They include the Secretary of State of Texas Geoffrey S. Connor and Members of U.S. Congress Martin Frost, Jeb Hensarling, Eddie Bernice Johnson, and Pete Sessions. Also present were the Mayors Robert Cluck of Arlington, Mike Simpson of Frisco, Bob Day of Garland, Joe Putnam of Irving, Bill Whitefield of McKinney, and Pat Evans of Plano; and Mayors Pro Tempore Joe Chow of Addison, John Loza of Carrollton, Mark Monroe of Garland, and John Murphy of Richardson.

of paper. And he looked at me from head to toe, again, and again. Finally, he said: “*You passed!*” (*Laughter*)

The relationship between the United States and the United Nations has always been dynamic – and at times better than others. For example, the U. N. Security Council rallied behind the United States after “Nine Eleven.” But the Council was not willing to heed President Bush’s call in early 2003 to clean up Iraq. So we went ahead with our own coalition to do the right thing.

America helped found the United Nations and remains committed to it in principle and practice. As President Bush has said “*This is America’s agenda in the world—from the defeat of terror, to the alleviation of disease and hunger, to the spread of human liberty. We welcome, and we need, the help, advice, and wisdom of friends and allies.*”⁹

The United States is determined to address the major challenges of this century while helping people around the world realize the abundant potential that freedom and democracy offer. This is so whether we are trying to stem a modern-day slave trade, ban all human cloning, promote freedom through democracies, or help others help themselves economically. Key to our efforts is effective multilateral diplomacy based on principled, consistent leadership, and core values. And that is best undertaken at the United Nations.

The President has always been strongly committed to promoting human dignity. He reminded us in his address to the U. N. General Assembly this past Tuesday. There he outlined a broad agenda from America’s point of view (quote) “*to advance human dignity and enhance the security of all of us. The defeat of terror, the protection of human rights, the spread of prosperity, the advance of democracy -- these causes, these ideals, call us to great work in the world. Each of us alone can only do so much. Together, we can accomplish so much more.*”

Combating human trafficking is an issue that goes straight to the heart of human dignity. Any trafficking in persons is wrong. All nations have a responsibility to confront it. Especially heinous is the sexual exploitation of children. America is leading the way to combat this country-by-country, and seeks U. N. support on this crusade.

Banning all forms of human cloning is a goal we have advanced for several years and we hope for a U. N. pronouncement on this.

As business people, you will be interested to know that there is a United Nations Commission on Private Sector and Development¹⁰. It reaffirmed that the private sector is the engine of economic growth, which in turn creates jobs and reduces poverty. This is a

⁹ **President’s Radio Address** before embarking on European and Middle East Tour, May 31, 2003

¹⁰ The **United Nations Commission on Private Sector and Development** is Co-Chaired by The Right Honorable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada and His Excellency Ernesto Zedillo, Director of Yale University Center for the Study of Globalization and Former President of Mexico. 2003

big change from the Cold War United Nations, where the state was everything and the private sector seemed not to exist in its parlance.

As goes prosperity, so goes freedom. Democracies cannot exclude either. We will work this autumn to solidify a “caucus of democracies” to bring their values to bear on U. N. decisions and activities.

America leads the way in voluntary contributions to U. N. humanitarian efforts. We remain the largest donor to the World Food Program, contributing 52 percent of its budget to help feed 72 million people in 82 countries. We also contribute 25 percent to the budget of the U. N. High Commissioner for Refugees. The United States is the leading donor to international efforts to deal with the scourge of HIV/AIDS. President Bush’s \$15 billion, five-year Emergency Plan for Aids Relief is the largest international health initiative ever to target a single disease.

It is said that the United States acts alone. But you can see from my points that this is simply untrue. International peace, long-term stability, democracy building, humanitarian relief, human rights are all in our national interest. Reducing hunger and illiteracy are as important to eliminating the hatred that breeds oppression, civil war, and terrorism as standing up any multinational force.

I was in Iraq early this month. I am so proud of our military. And I am most humbled by their dedication in the defense of freedom. Let us give them a big, big hand (*applause*). While in Baghdad, I was impressed with the commitment of Iraqi leaders I met in moving their country forward to be a model of democratic responsibility. Prime Minister (Iyad) Allawi reaffirmed that commitment yesterday at the U. N.

I am honored to represent you at the United Nations. Each time I walk in, they look at me. Through me, they see you. They see America. They see its promises. They see its opportunities. They want to know what I have to say. The place suddenly becomes quiet the minute they hear: “*On behalf of the United States....*” That is my proudest moment! (*Applause*)

Thank you.